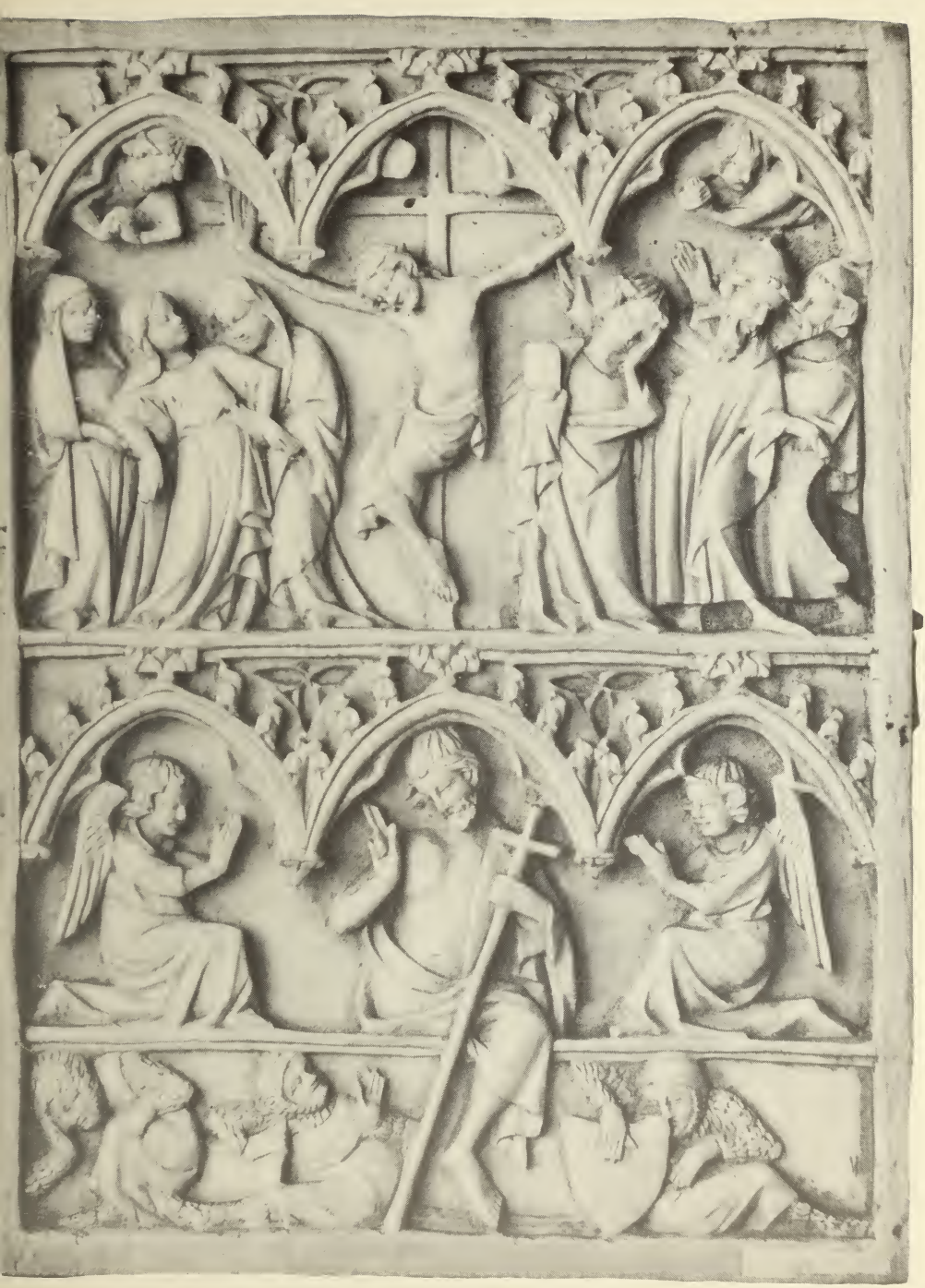

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The Medieval Sculptor

BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART
1971

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COVER: CAT. 31, SCENES FROM THE PASSION OF CHRIST
TITLE PAGE: CAT. 20, FRIEZE FRAGMENT (detail)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition could not have been possible without the enthusiasm and active participation of a number of people. Professor Brooks W. Stoddard provided not only the original inspiration, but undertook to select the objects and prepare the essay and catalogue. The generosity of the Braitmayer Foundation enabled us to realize this exhibition and record it by this publication. We have been extremely fortunate to have the cooperation and active assistance of many people. Our particular thanks go to Mr. Hanns Swarzenski and Mr. Robert Moeller, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Miss Carmen Gomez-Moreno and Mr. Jeffrey Hoffeld, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Miss Agnes Mongan and Mr. Arthur Beal, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; and Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Weisgall, New York, for their substantial aid and hospitality. We are grateful to all the lenders, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Fogg Art Museum; Williams College Museum of Art; Duke University Art Museum and private collectors for sharing their objects with us.

R.V.W.

THIS EXHIBITION IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
Professor Charles Pierre Livingston

PREFACE

Tous les éléments de l'art sont dans la nature; l'art lui-même n'est que dans la pensée de l'homme.

Victor Duruy, *Histoire de France*

To anyone at all interested in the plastic arts, Medieval sculpture offers a veritable encyclopedia of form; even when wrenched from original context by the vicissitudes of neglect or the necessity for preservation, the remaining fragments of once complete ensembles can still fascinate and instruct.

Considering the indignities suffered by Romanesque and Gothic sculpture, particularly the architectural variety, at the hands of iconoclasts, reformers, revolutionaries, restorers and critics it is amazing that so much still survives. What Renaissance contempt and the fervor of the French Revolution did not obscure, the Romantic adulation of the nineteenth century almost did. Our attitude today is hopefully more scholarly and rational, if less lyrical. While many puzzles concerning style and school still await solution, we have a much better idea of the cosmopolitan nature of Medieval sculpture and the character (if not the names) of the artisans who produced it.

The purpose of this exhibition is to display and contrast a portion of the materials and processes available to the medieval sculptor. There is, of course, no one archetypal medieval sculptor any more than there is one Romanesque or Gothic style. The sculptor was a specialist, carving in stone or wood or ivory or working in metal. Family tradition must have been strong, as was the workshop and later the guild. Each medium had its own traditions which influenced technique and often style. While there was considerable overlapping, it was entirely possible for two masters working in the same geographical area to produce works strikingly different in style.

An inspection of the variety of objects produced during the

Middle Ages reveals that the medieval sculptor commanded extremely refined and sophisticated techniques in the working of metal, ivory, wood and stone. Throughout the period, traditional methods seem to have been perfected and adapted to new uses. An interesting example is the stone drill, introduced in Antiquity as an illusionistic shortcut. In the architectural sculpture of the twelfth century it is used for stunning decorative effect, some hint of which can be seen in several pieces included in this exhibition. Another technique derived from classical usage (but probably reinforced from non-Western sources) was polychromy — painting sculpture for mimetic or decorative effect. Medieval use of polychromy was widespread and essentially decorative. Weather and time have taken their toll so that only traces remain on stone sculpture exposed to the elements; enameled metalware and painted wood sculpture, perhaps, provide us with an idea of the original effect. Some interior stone monuments, such as the English alabaster relief in the exhibition, have preserved rather well the extent — if not the hues — of polychromy. An example of another kind of polychromy can also be noted here: a small statue of the Virgin using two different colors of marble to contrast face and hands (now missing) with drapery.

This small teaching exhibition is not intended to be a complete survey of medieval styles, although it would be difficult not to touch a great many stylistic bases with the variety of objects included. Rather, we have chosen a limited number of pieces which illustrate the wide variety of responses the medieval artisan-craftsman could make to the varying demands of usage, material, patronage and subject matter. We hope it succeeds in this rather didactic task, as well as delighting the eye.

RICHARD V. WEST
DIRECTOR

THE MEDIEVAL SCULPTOR

Our present admiration and regard for Medieval sculpture and architecture is a relatively recent phenomenon. Misunderstood and scorned by Renaissance man and his heirs, Medieval art was recognized as something considerably more than "the art of the barbarous Goths" only in the early nineteenth century through the eyes and writing of such men as Emile Mâle, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, and Adolphe-Napoleon Didron. We now know that art in Western Europe from approximately the tenth century through the fourteenth grew out of a Christianized civilization that was anything but a cultural vacuum. The richness and variety of the surviving works in stone, ivory and metalwork alone testifies to the remarkable creativity of the Middle Ages.

From the beginning medieval artisans were faced with creating new imagery for the didactic purpose of explaining in visual terms the concepts of Christianity based on the Old and New Testaments. Christian iconography eventually developed certain images that were not drawn from nature or readily perceptible to the eye. Despite Classical revivals in the ninth and twelfth centuries, Greco-Roman naturalism by itself was unequal to the elaborate programs undertaken by medieval stone cutters. Instead, Medieval art evolved a highly symbolic, formal syntax combining the Greco-Roman heritage of the Mediterranean world with the highly decorative and abstract art of the various Barbarians who had migrated across Western Europe between the Fall of the Roman Empire and stabilization brought about under Charlemagne by the ninth century. The major contribution of Barbaric migratory art to later Medieval art in all its forms cannot be underestimated. The character of this influence has been described by the art historian Ernst Kitzinger *(Early Medieval Art):* "This Northern art was opposed to Mediterranean art in almost every respect . . . Goldsmith's work, enamelling, the casting of small bronze objects, and bone carving were the crafts in which the Northern artists excelled, and their aim was not the

representation of some definite subject, religious, historical or otherwise, but abstract ornament." The greatest fusion of these two artistic worlds occurred after the Carolingian renaissance of the ninth century during the Romanesque and Gothic eras in Western Europe. Carvers and metalsmiths flourished, creating both reliquaries and stone decoration demanded by the thousands of churches and cathedrals founded throughout the period.

The phenomenal rise of monasticism, most notably the Order of Cluny in Burgundy, accelerated the rate of church building, prompting the Cluniac monk, Raoul Glaber, to write in 1003: "Notwithstanding the greater number [of churches] which were already established and not in the least in need, nevertheless each Christian people strove against the others to erect nobler ones. It was as if the whole earth, having cast off the old by shaking itself, were clothing itself everywhere in the white robe of the church."

Approximately a century and a half earlier, the discovery of the bones of Apostle St. James Major at Santiago de Compostela in Northwestern Spain quickly led to the establishment of pilgrimage roads to that holy site from England, Germany, Italy and France. The discovery of St. James' relics had an enormous spiritual impact (as well as a practical one) on Western Christendom, especially in the lengthy struggle to reconquer Spain from the Moslems which lasted throughout the Middle Ages. These Pilgrimage Roads to Santiago were great avenues of communication in Romanesque and Gothic times. All men aspired to make a pilgrimage, mostly on foot, to the Shrine of St. James.

Thousands of stone parish churches, often possessing their own relics, grew up along these routes for the use of the pilgrims. Hundreds still stand today. Artistic interchange was greatly facilitated, especially with the workshops of stone carvers who traveled from church to church. Thus the style of Germanic metalworkers trained in the Ottonian Court reappears in some eleventh century Spanish metalwork in the Navarre region. Or the sculptures and architecture

of the great basilicas of St. James at Santiago and St. Sernin at Toulouse in Languedoc are strongly interrelated.

Romanesque churches of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the great Gothic cathedrals of the late twelfth to fifteenth centuries provided the setting for the images created by the medieval sculptor from a great variety of materials. Inside the church, metalwork in the form of reliquaries (cat. 21, 26 & 27) of all kinds, candlesticks, chalices and so forth, played an important liturgical role. Modeling gold, silver, bronze and semi-precious jewels into these dazzling creations was a major art in the spectrum of medieval media.

Sculpture in stone played its part both within and without the building. Romanesque stone sculptures were almost always carved for an architectonic placement such as historiated or floral capitals in nave, choir, or cloister piers; capitals, archivolt, corbel and tympana ensembles on the exterior. The sculptured facades of Romanesque Europe are superb instances of coordination between architecture and sculpture. The iconographic programs of sculpted facades were drawn from many sources: the Bible, chronicles, Lives of the Saints, exegetic treatises and bestiaries of real and fantastic animals. Another significant source for some Gothic iconography was the famous encyclopedic treatise *Speculum majus* by Vincent de Beauvais (c. 1190-c. 1264).

The narrative complexity and richness of medieval facade ensembles are a major aspect of the creative genius of this age. These sculptures seem more than just "encyclopedias in stone" since they are witness to medieval man's conception of reality. These realities are illustrated by such themes as the Labors of the Months, the Adoration of the Magi or the Coronation of the Virgin Mary. Contrast was an overriding theme of the medieval *imagiers*. The finality of the struggle between Sin and Salvation is often visualized graphically as triumphant soldiers of Virtue trampling underfoot little grotesque personifications of Vice, according to the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, or the provocative Last Judgements in Romanesque

and Gothic tympana. Seemingly, the medieval sculptor had greater enjoyment in carving those to the left of Christ *(ad sinistrum),* the naked Damned Ones being pushed down into the gaping jaws of a monster personifying Hell, than the Elect to His right. In these serious struggles, humor is often visible in the grotesqueries and contortions of the human form. It is given free play in more purely decorative architectural features, such as the corbel from the Church of San Miguel at Uncastillo in Spain (cat. 6). Rabelais must well have appreciated the medieval sculptor!

Animals, real and fantastic, appear everywhere in Medieval sculpture, often intertwined with floral forms such as in the capitals (cat. 5 & 16). The Lion, as King of Beasts, was feared for his power and respected for his courage. A favorite theme was Samson breaking the Jaws of the Lion, alluded to in the bronze *dinanderie* candlestick (cat. 21). The griffon, combination of eagle and lion, was considered even more fearsome.

Much Medieval sculpture was formed or carved for interior church furnishings and took the form of carved wood, stone and metal altarpieces or figures for the Gothic rood screen separating the crossing from the high altar. Bowdoin's and Duke's Gothic heads (cat. 29 & 30) may have been originally placed on figures in just such a setting.

Henri Focillon, the pioneering French art historian, speaks of the medieval sculptor in his *Art des sculpteurs romans:* "We are dealing with sculpture, that is with a certain interpretation of space, and it is by interpreting space with the sculptors, by standing behind them, following with finger and mind the various contours, undulations, reliefs and hollows of their work that we may have the good fortune to discover their creative secret."

BROOKS W. STODDARD

CATALOGUE

NOTE: All dimensions are given in inches.
Abbreviations: H.=height, W.=width, D.=depth, L.=length, and Dia.=diameter.

BYZANTINE

1. Asia Minor, probably 6th century
found in Anatolia
Pilgrim's Flask, showing the Eastern Holy Riders
copper, H. 4¾
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1967

ROMANESQUE

2. France (Languedoc), ca. 1140
from St. Pons-de-Thomieres
Capital, with interwoven birds and human heads
limestone, H. 10¼ x W. 10½
Lent by Williams College Museum of Art

3. France (Burgundy), mid-12th century
from Moutiers-St.-Jean
Capital, fragment
limestone, H. 8⅛ x W. 10½
Lent by Williams College Museum of Art
NOTE: The delicacy of this carving in the bird and foliate forms relates it to the archivolt fragment of an angel from the north portal of the great Romanesque basilica of St. Lazarus at Autun.

4. France (Périgord), early 12th century
from St. Raphaël près d'Excideuil
Figure Holding a Book, torso fragment
limestone, H. 18¼
Lent by Williams College Museum of Art

5. Spain (Aragon), late 12th century
from San Miguel, Uncastillo (Zaragosa)
Capital, with intertwined vines and lion heads
limestone, H. 10¾ x W. 11⅝

Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 28.32
Purchased with the Francis Bartlett Donation

6. Spain (Aragon), late 12th century
from San Miguel, Uncastillo (Zaragosa)
Corbel, grotesque female figure
limestone, H. 14 x W. 8 x D. 31
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 28.32
Purchased with the Francis Bartlett Donation
NOTE: The two corbels and capital formed part of the original Romanesque portal of San Miguel installed in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1930.

7. Spain (Aragon), late 12th century
from San Miguel, Uncastillo (Zaragosa)
Corbel, figure of a musician
limestone, H. 13½ x W. 7¾ x D. 35¼
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 28.32
Purchased with the Francis Bartlett Donation

8. France (Mosan), second half of 12th century
Corpus from a Crucifixion
gilt bronze, H. 3⅞
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917

9. France (Languedoc), 12th century
from St. Guilhem-le-Désert
Lion Voussoir, relief
limestone, H. 12⅜ x W. 11⅛
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Cloisters Collection

10. France (Roussillon), second half of 12th century
from St. Michael and St. Germain at Cuxa
Agnus Dei and Cherub, relief
marble, H. 27 x W. 14⅜

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Cloisters Collection

11. France (Roussillon), second half of 12th century
from St. Michael and St. Germain at Cuxa
Rampant and Winged Lions, relief
marble, H. 17 x W. 8½
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Cloisters Collection

12. France (Burgundy), ca. 1125-1130
from St. Lazarus at Autun
Heraldic Angel, archivolt fragment
limestone, H. 16 x W. 18
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard
University

NOTE: Formerly in the Collection of Abbé Terret, Autun. This archivolt was part of the north portal of St. Lazarus, carved by Gislebertus who, in a very rare gesture for the medieval sculptor, identified himself by inscribing his name at the bottom of the Last Judgement tympanum of the west facade. The lines and fluttering hems of the angel's drapery correspond exactly to similar draperies in the signed facade tympanum. The elongation of figural proportions and drapery details do suggest an affinity to the style of some contemporary Burgundian manuscripts. This fragment is being exhibited publicly for the first time since the inner portal was dismembered in 1766.

13. France (Burgundy), mid-12th century
Winged Lion (St. Mark?), spandrel relief
limestone, traces of original polychrome, H. 9¾
x W. 28
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard
University

14. France (Burgundy), 12th century
St. Gilles Protecting the Hind, spandrel relief

limestone, H. 15½ x W. 31
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

NOTE: The compactness of narration is striking despite the limitations of the circular format. The approaching hunter is separated from St. Gilles by the now missing bow. St. Gilles partially covers the hind with his protective mantle as a loosed arrow speeds by. His gently restraining hands seem almost unfinished.

15. France (Burgundy), third quarter of 12th century
Architectural Frieze, fragment
limestone, H. 9 x W. 14½
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

16. France (Languedoc), last quarter 12th century
Capital, intertwined winged serpents
limestone, H. 9⅛ x W. 8¾ x Dia. 11
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 19.645
Gift of Mrs. Albertine W. F. Valentine

17. France (Périgord), early 12th century
from St. Raphaël près d'Excideuil
Capital Fragment, lion head
limestone, H. 7½
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

18. France (Périgord), early 12th century
from St. Raphaël près d'Excideuil
Archivolt Fragment, interwoven vines and grotesque face
limestone, H. 14
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

19. France (Périgord), early 12th century
from St. Raphaël près d'Excideuil
Archivolt Fragment, interwoven vines and grotesque face
limestone, H. 15
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

20. France (Burgundy), 12th century
from Dompierre
Frieze Fragment, foliate rinceaux
stone, H. 9⅜
Lent by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

21. North Germany, ca. 1200
Samson and the Lion, candlestick
bronze dinanderie, H. 10¼
Lent by Mr. & Mrs. Hugo Weisgall

22. Flanders (Meuse Valley), 12th century
Bounding Lion, from a candelabrum
bronze, H. 2¾
Lent by Mr. & Mrs. Hugo Weisgall

23. North Germany or Upper Austria, early 13th century
Deer, candlestick
bronze, H. 4¾
Lent by Mr. & Mrs. Hugo Weisgall
NOTE: The highly abstract character of this piece and the next one suggests the influence of a non-Western source.

24. North Germany or Upper Austria, early 13th century
Deer with Short Antlers, candlestick

bronze, H. 3¾
Lent by Mr. & Mrs. Hugo Weisgall

GOTHIC

25. Spain (Catalonia), 13th century
Madonna and Child
wood with gesso gilding and polychrome, H. 21½
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Lehman, 1943

26. France (Limoges), 13th century
Reliquary Casket, with scenes of the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary, St. John, Two Angels with Symbols of the Passion and Christ in a Mandorla
champlevé enamel and gilt, H. 5½ x L. 6⅝ x W. 2½
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917

27. France (Limoges), early 13th century
Plaque from a Casket, chimera motif
copper gilt, H. 1⅝ x W. 3¾
Lent Anonymously
NOTE: These two fantastic animals attest to the ingenuity of the medieval metalsmith in combining animal and foliate forms into a rhythmic composition. A pendant piece was exhibited in *The Year 1200* exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1970, catalogue number 79.

28. France (Burgundy), late 13th century
Angel, relief fragment
limestone, traces of polychrome, H. 16
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 42.493 Frederick Brown Fund
NOTE: Formerly in the possession of Abbé Terret, Autun.

29. France (Ile-de-France), ca. 1215-1220
Head of a King
limestone, H. 6⅝
1915.100
Bowdoin College Museum of Art,
Gift of Edward Perry Warren

30. France (Ile-de-France), ca. 1325-1335
Head of a King
limestone, H. 9¾
Lent by the Duke University Art Museum,
Brummer Collection
NOTE: The stylization in the hair pattern is quite close to the Bowdoin head. Both heads are unfinished at the rear and have chiseled holes on top, suggesting that their original placement may have been on a rood choir screen.

31. France (Ile-de-France), 14th century
Scenes from the Passion of Christ, diptych
ivory, H. 5⅝ x W. 8⅜ (open)
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
NOTE: Ivory was considered a precious material and because of its strength and uniformity of texture afforded great delicacy of carving for its diminutive size. This diptych was undoubtedly a private devotional work to be carried about or taken on pilgrimages.

32. France (Ile-de-France), 14th century
Jousting and Courtly Scenes, plaque
ivory, H. 3⅞ x W. 7
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917

33. Italy (Milan), ca. 1350
attrib. to the workshop of Giovanni di
Balduccio

Madonna Enthroned with Angels
marble, H. 15
Lent by the Williams College Museum of Art

34. France (Ile-de-France), ca. 1400
Corpus from a Crucifixion, relief fragment
marble, H. 10½
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of J. G. Demotte, 1920

35. France (Picardy or Burgundy), ca. 1400
Virgin Enthroned
black and tan marble, H. 22¼
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Cloisters Collection

36. England (Nottingham School), 15th century
The Virgin, St. Anne and Joachim, relief
alabaster, polychromed, H. 15½ x W. 10
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Rogers Fund, 1908

37. Spain (Burgos), late 15th century
from the tomb of Juan de Padilla (d. 1491)
St. James the Less, wall statuette
alabaster, H. 29
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916

38. Netherlandish, ca. 1500
Man of Sorrows
wood, H. 16½
Lent by Mr. & Mrs. Hugo Weisgall

39. South Germany (Augsburg), ca. 1500
by Georg Seld

St. Nicholas of Myra
silver with gilt, H. 6⅞
Lent by Williams College Museum of Art
NOTE: This patron saint of children, sailors, merchants and pawnbrokers is here shown with his attribute of three balls alluding to the legend in which St. Nicholas saved three girls from prostitution by throwing three bags of gold for dowries through their window one night. This St. Nicholas was a bishop in Constantinople in the fourth century A.D. and is the origin of "Father Christmas."

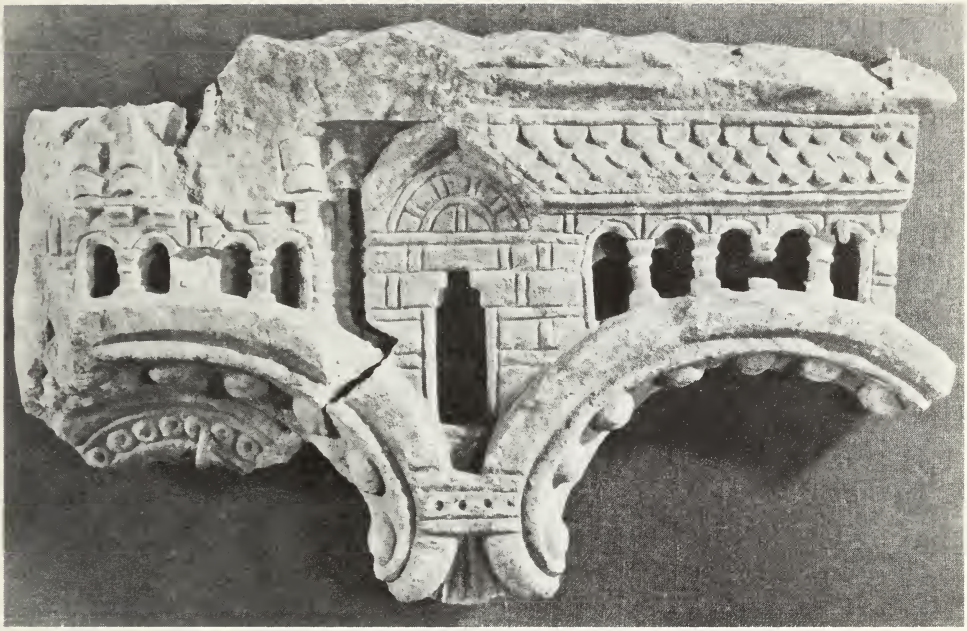
40. Flanders (Antwerp or Malines), ca. 1500
Madonna and Child
limewood, H. 24
1963.281
Bowdoin College Museum of Art,
Gift of Susan Dwight Bliss

ILLUSTRATIONS

CAT. 4, FIGURE HOLDING A BOOK

CAT. 37, ST. JAMES THE LESS

CAT. 14, ST. GILLES PROTECTING THE HIND

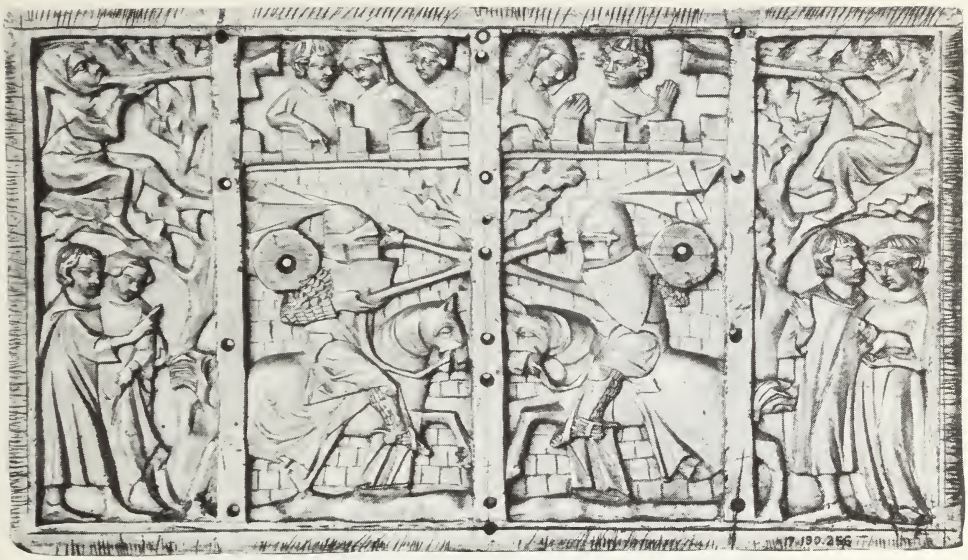


CAT. 15, ARCHITECTURAL FRIEZE

CAT. 36, THE VIRGIN, ST. ANNE AND JOACHIM

CAT. 29, HEAD OF A KING

CAT. 26, RELIQUARY CASKET



CAT. 32, JOUSTING AND COURTLY SCENES

CAT. 16, CAPITAL, INTERTWINED WINGED SERPENTS